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Where Can You Get Help?

- Visit your county extension office. Talk to your county agent. He can answer many of your questions and can put you in touch with others who can be of assistance, such as your Rural Areas Development Committee.
- USDA, State and local agencies can provide information to help you decide whether or not to go into the farm vacation business. Many of them also advise and provide technical assistance and credit, especially the Soil Conservation Service and the Farmers Home Administration. Individuals and organizations associated with vacation farm enterprises also may furnish valuable help.
- The following publications may help you. You can get a copy from your county agent or he can tell you where to get one.

Rural Recreation Enterprises for Profit—AIB 277.

Rural Recreation—New Opportunities on Private Land—MP 930.

Recreation Enterprises Can Boost Farm and Ranch Income—PA 562.

Forest Recreation for Profit—AIB 265.

Loans to Family Farmers for Recreation Enterprises—PA 563.

Cooperative Extension Work: United States Department of Agriculture and State Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Cooperating. Issued November 1963.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1963-O-710-936

So you're planning a VACATION FARM BUSINESS!

NATURE IS YOUR PARTNER . . .

City families enjoy farm life with its outdoor air, woods, domestic animals and wildlife, streams and ponds. Providing farm vacations for them can be a profitable sideline.

Many farmers have already developed such "family recreation packages" for paying guests, with board and lodging on their farms. They began on a small scale—have grown into larger enterprises through experience.

Farm vacation enterprises supplement farm income—help the economic development of rural communities.



Are You Qualified?

If your answer is "yes" to the following questions, you stand a good chance of developing a successful "farm-vacation" business:

- Are you near enough to prospective guests? (Most families vacation within 250 miles of home.)
- Can you advertise successfully to attract them?
- Is your entire family interested in meeting and sharing your home with new people? (Guests will have different backgrounds and you'll have less privacy.)
- Do you have an attractive, comfortable home with spare bedrooms (or extra cabin or cottage) with enough extra bedding and furniture?
- Do you have electricity, a sufficient and safe water supply, and one or more modern bathrooms for guests?
- Does the homemaker enjoy preparing good food in abundance, and can she cope with the extra laundry, the wear and tear on herself, her family, and her home?
- Will you enjoy showing your guests around the place? May they join in activities appealing to city families—feeding the livestock, gathering the eggs, driving and riding horses, picking fruit and vegetables, fishing and swimming in the farm pond, and exploring the fields, crops, trees, and flowers?
- Does your farm and nearby community afford ample recreational facilities and other attractions to keep guests busy and happy? Don't overlook the possibilities of your woodlot and your pond, lake, or river for recreation values. These sites offer excellent picnic, camping and water sports areas. Acquaint yourself with community resources—nearby scenic and historical points of interest; summer theaters, fairs, and festivals; community games, sports, square dances; legends and lore of the land; and club meetings, local crafts, and hobbies.
- How will this new activity fit into your regular farm business? Can you provide the additional labor and management required to accommodate guests? You may need to be willing to overlook possible inconveniences caused by your visitors.
- Will you need more financing to get this enterprise started? Investigate private and public lenders if you need more capital.



Think of These Before You Start

Find out about *health and sanitary requirements* of your State or county specific to water supply, food, and living conditions when serving the public. Your county health department can advise you here.

Be sure you have adequate *liability protection* against safety hazards and injuries to visitors. Generally, normal farm liability insurance does not cover people who pay to be on your farm. Check with your attorney and/or your insurance agent.

Investigate need for State or county *licenses and permits* for certain recreational activities. Some phases of recreational enterprises are regulated by

law, for instance, hunting and fishing. Check on *zoning* for your area. Be sure you know these regulations and requirements. Your attorney, county agent, or the appropriate county or State agency can help.

Tax obligations should be surveyed. In some States these may include sales and service taxes that apply to your vacation farm business. It will also pay to consider the effect of your farm vacation business on State and Federal income taxes. Your tax advisor, county agent or the respective State or county agency can advise you on tax obligations.

Informing Customers

Once you've decided to set up your business, you must contact prospective customers. Most businessmen agree that it pays to advertise. The big questions are *how, where, and how much?*

It's often said that a satisfied customer is the best advertising medium. This is generally true. But a way must be found to get the first customers. And you must be sure you're offering services that will appeal to your public. Stress these appeals in your advertising. Keep it lively, short, but informative. Be prepared to follow up with more details.

There are many means to advertise your business. Some of these are:

- *Nearby city newspapers.* Try to place a newspaper ad in the travel section. A series of small ads is considered better than a single large ad. Radio advertising could help, too.
- *Tourist promotion agencies.* Private agencies charge for listing—usually a sign-up fee and sometimes a percentage of your business. Some States have tourist or travel promotion agencies that will list you free-of-charge.
- *Your own association.* Your own organization made up of people who provide farm vacation facilities in your county, area or State helps to pool your efforts in promotion. Such an association can publish a list of members and what each has to offer. These brochures can be widely distributed through travel bureaus, chambers of commerce, civic clubs, State departments of development, and the like.

They can be used as mailing pieces for answering inquiries. And the association can send copies to writers and broadcasters featuring "outdoor" columns and shows.

These brochures usually describe each farm and surrounding area, accommodations, recreational activities, the weekly rate per person, and directions for writing or finding the farm.

In addition to promotional activities, such an association may set up minimum standards of operation that the members must meet.

- *Private brochures.* You may find it pays also to print or mimeograph your own brochure going into greater detail about your vacation farm. An Ohio survey showed guests preferred detailed information. Your brochure can be used to answer inquiries. You can also place copies in strategic locations where potential customers can easily get hold of them.
- *Capitalize on newness.* The newness of the farm vacation idea means that many newspaper and magazine editors, along with radio and TV personnel, are interested in writing and telling about this new business. So . . . let them know.
- *Locating your farm.* Signs—not so much to advertise—but to enable people to locate your farm, will help. So will brochures, posters, or telling local chambers of commerce or business people about your enterprise.

Operating a Vacation Farm

Most operators of vacation farms grew into the business by starting in a small way. The odds are against being able to start out big the first year. Growing into the business will give you a chance to learn by experience what vacationers prefer and how best to satisfy their needs. This will help you avoid disappointments and heavy expenses while you're getting started.

Many vacation farm operators require a deposit with advance reservations. Some have developed lists of "rules" and schedules for meals, etc., that are mailed to guests or posted for them to read. Complete details will save misunderstandings and make the vacation experience happier for both hosts and guests.

You'll find that providing guest accommodations can be demanding, yet satisfying and profitable—if you're adequately prepared and manage well. By all means, *keep a good set of records.*

How Much To Charge?

How profitable your business will be depends on the rates you charge, number of clients, costs, and on your managerial abilities. Only you can determine this. Carefully figure out the probable costs and returns of your business before you make your final decision to start. This will depend somewhat on the type of guests to be served. Families with children will require yard equipment, special foods, and watchful care. Some people may be able to take care of themselves all day, while for others you may need to provide some side trips and other things to do.

Surveys show a wide range of charges for farm vacations—from \$35 to \$60 per week per adult and from \$20 to \$30 for children. Accommodations and services vary widely, as does the nearness to the clientele's residence and the number of guests entertained.



